

3.12 Roadless Areas and Unroaded Areas

Introduction

This analysis focuses on the direct and indirect effects of activities proposed in the Como Forest Health project on roadless area values, including unroaded areas. The assessment of existing condition and potential effects are based on the wilderness attributes defined in FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70. The combination of the Selway-Bitterroot Roadless Area and adjacent unroaded areas make up the roadless expanse (*Figure 3.12- 1*).

This analysis also describes the direct and indirect effects of the proposed action and alternatives to the proposed action on attributes of scenic-eligible Lost Horse Creek. This analysis is based on the characteristics in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (PL-90-542).

3.12.1 Overview of Issues Addressed

The primary issue for roadless area values, including unroaded areas is how the activities associated with timber harvest would affect the wilderness attributes of the roadless expanse. Components of timber harvest that may affect the wilderness attributes are:

- “ increased log truck, logging equipment, and administrative traffic
- “ smoke from prescribed burning activities
- “ increase in dust on National Forest System Roads
- “ changes to scenery
- “ noise from skidding and tree cutting
- “ log hauling
- “ road and landing construction
- “ tracked –line machine trail and skid trail development
- “ rehabilitation of temporary roads, TLM and skid trails, and landings
- “ creation and rehabilitation of slash piles
- “ prescribed burning activities.

3.12.2 Regulatory Framework

3.12.2.1 National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires integrated use of the natural and social sciences in all planning and decision-making that affects the human environment. The human environment includes the natural and physical environment and the relationship of people to the environment (40 CFR 1508.14).

3.12.2.2 Bitterroot National Forest Plan Direction

The Bitterroot National Forest Plan (Forest Plan) describes recreation management goals and standards for each Management Area (MA). The Como Forest Health project area includes MAs 1, 2, 3a, 3b, 3c. MA 5 adjoins the project area on the west side. Recreation management standards for each MA are as follows:

- “ MA 1 – Manage for recreation activities associated with roads and motorized equipment. The recreation opportunity spectrum setting is roaded natural (USDA Forest Service 1987, pg. III-3).

- “ MA 2 – Manage for recreation activities associated with roads and motorized equipment. Off-road vehicle use will be controlled during critical periods on susceptible ranges such as high-use winter range, spring range, and densely roaded fall range. The recreation opportunity spectrum setting is roaded natural (USDA Forest Service 1987, pg. III-9).
- “ MA 3a – Manage to provide recreation opportunities associated with main access roads and fishing streams. The recreation opportunity spectrum setting is roaded natural or semi-primitive motorized (USDA Forest Service 1987, pg. III-16).
- “ MA 3b – Manage for recreation activities associated with lakes and streams. The recreation opportunity spectrum setting is roaded natural (USDA Forest Service 1987, pg. III-23.)
- “ MA 3c -Manage for recreation access to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. The recreation opportunity spectrum setting is roaded natural (USDA Forest Service 1987, p. III-30).
- “ MA 5 – Manage for recreation activities associated with roadless areas, including hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, motorbiking and snowmobiling. The recreation opportunity spectrum setting is semi-primitive motorized and nonmotorized (USDA Forest Service 1987, pg. III-37).

Applicable laws, regulations, and policy that govern the management of Designated Wilderness, Recommended Wilderness, Inventoried Roadless Areas, are as follows:

- “ The Wilderness Act of 1964 (PL 88-577).
- “ Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2320,
- “ 36 CFR Part 294 Special Areas, Roadless Area Conservation; Final Rule
- “ RARE II, 1979. (CFR 292 subpart B, §294.11)
- “ Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.12
- “ Selway Bitterroot Wilderness General Management Direction
- “ The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (PL 90-542 as amended 16 U.S.C. 1271-1287)

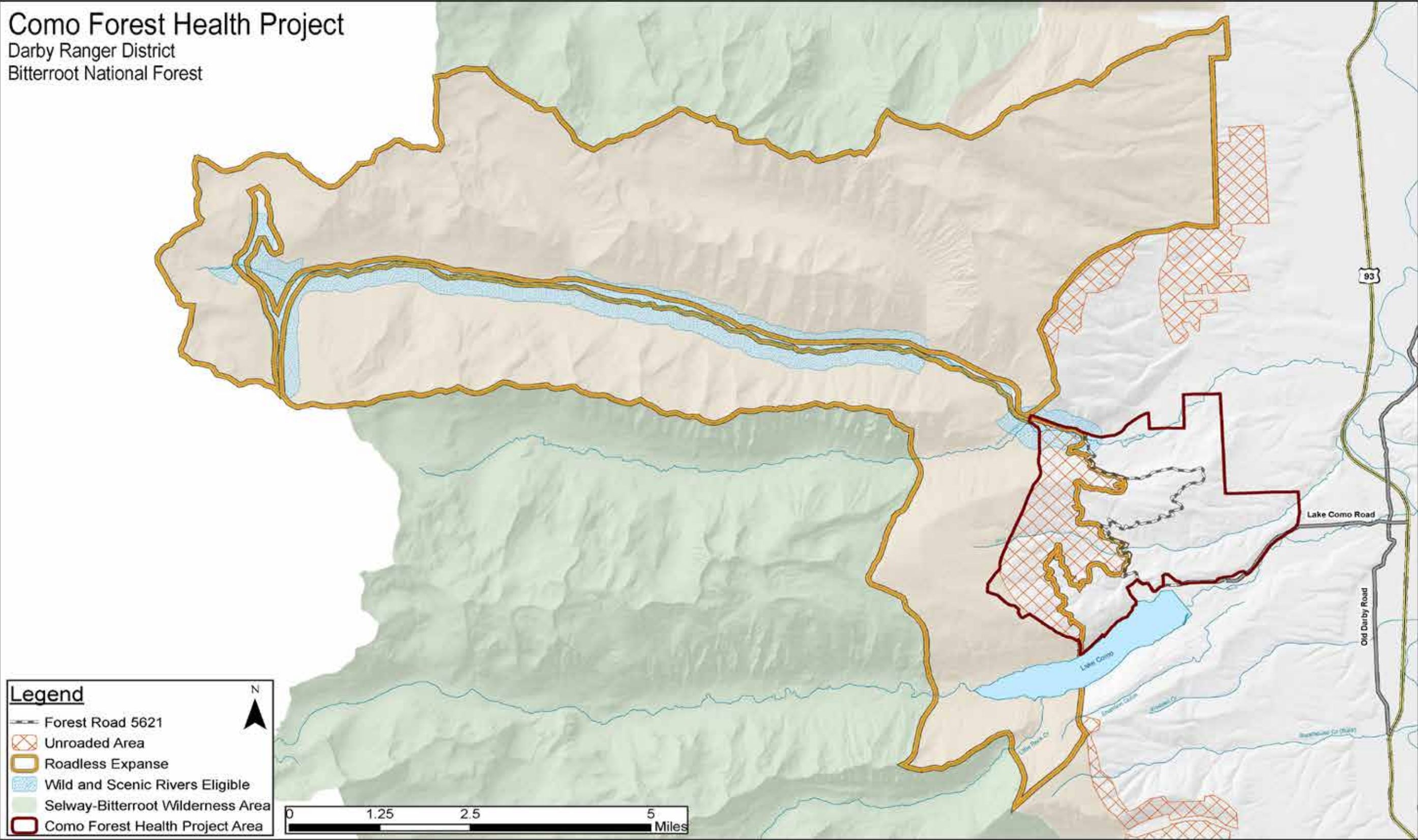
In 2007, the Forest Service Northern Region Leadership Team identified the large land base, and abundance of relatively primitive and undeveloped landscape as a very important asset or “niche” to the American people. This niche includes wilderness, recommended wilderness areas, inventoried roadless areas, wilderness study areas, and the importance of backcountry and dispersed recreation settings.

The Bitterroot National Forest also defined their niche and the opportunities it provides to local, regional, and national visitors. The Bitterroot National Forest niche matches the Regional niche by recognizing the unique expanse of undeveloped backcountry, designated wilderness, recommended wilderness, inventoried roadless areas, wilderness study areas, and wild river qualities of the National Forest.

3.12.2.3 Wild and Scenic River Act

Under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Congress designates river systems to the National Wild and Scenic River System that the Forest Service determines are suitable or eligible for congressional designation. The stated purpose of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is to

Figure 3.12- 1: Roadless Expanse Associated with the Como Forest Health Project.



protect wild, scenic, and recreational rivers for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations (Section 1(b)). The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act defines streams eligible for inclusion into the Wild and Scenic River System as *"...a free flowing stream and the related adjacent land area that possesses one or more of the values referred in Section 1, subsection (b) of this Act" (Section 2(b))*. The values referred to in subsection 1(b) are "scenic, recreational, geological, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values." The administering agency of a designated wild, scenic, or recreational river needs to administer it in *"such a manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused the river to be included in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system"* Section 10(a).

3.12.3 Existing Condition of the Affected Environment

Portions of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness (1,340,000 acres), the Selway-Bitterroot Roadless Area (01067), (115,625 acres), and unroaded lands (1660 acres) are either in close proximity to or adjoin the Como Forest Health project area. A portion of the Selway-Bitterroot Roadless Area abuts the west side of the Como Forest Health project area and 72 acres of Burn Unit E overlaps it (*Figure 3.12- 1*).

The Selway-Bitterroot Roadless Area was inventoried by the Forest Service for possible inclusion in the wilderness preservation system in the 1970 Roadless Area Review and Evaluation process. The portion of the Selway-Bitterroot Roadless Area that overlaps the project area was recommended for inclusion as wilderness in the Forest Plan. Unroaded areas adjacent to the Selway-Bitterroot Roadless Area are less than 5,000 acres but are contiguous to the roadless area, which is contiguous to the designated Wilderness.

The original inventory of roadless lands took place through the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE I) process, and then again in the late 1970s during RARE II. The RARE process was intended to evaluate the potential for such roadless areas to be included in the wilderness preservation system. Roadless areas outside of Idaho and Colorado are those areas designated as Inventoried Roadless Areas pursuant to 36 CFR Subpart B. This includes areas identified in a set of inventoried roadless area maps, contained in the Forest Service Roadless Area Conservation, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volume 2, dated November 2000. Effective March of 2001, 36 CFR Part 294 Special Areas; Roadless Area Conservation; Final Rule was adopted to provide lasting protection for inventoried roadless areas with the National Forest System in the context of multiple-use management.

The Selway-Bitterroot Roadless areas hold special values for many individuals. This large expanse of wild land is home to wildlife, clean water, native fisheries, outstanding primitive recreation opportunities, beautiful scenery, and unique geologic, historic, and cultural features. This combination of attributes and "undeveloped" spaces create a rare and unique setting in a world where ever-increasing urbanization, population increases, and modification of the natural environment are more the norm. Many people have expressed their feelings that maintaining the integrity of these wild lands is important to them, though they may never have an opportunity to experience them first hand.

No activities are proposed in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness nor is the Como Forest Health project area within or directly adjacent to the Wilderness boundary. About 72 acres of the project area overlaps into the Selway-Bitterroot Roadless Area and the rest of

the project area is adjacent to the roadless area boundary. A moderate severity prescribed fire is proposed in the area of overlap.

The Forest Service proposes timber harvest, moderate and low severity prescribed fire, and road construction in unroaded areas adjacent to the roadless area. The unroaded areas do not have a special designation; the Forest Plan and Management Area designations guide management. Timber has been harvested from the unroaded areas since the 1970s.

3.12.3.1 Units of Measure for Roadless Areas for Inclusion to Wilderness System

The 1964 Wilderness Act identified attributes of natural integrity, apparent naturalness, opportunities for solitude, and opportunities for a primitive recreation experience to determine the wilderness qualities of an area. Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.12, 72.1 discusses the attributes of wilderness, and additional attributes considered when evaluating potential wilderness areas (roadless characteristics). A cross walk between wilderness attributes and roadless characteristics is presented in Table 3.12- 1. These attributes are used to compare existing and desired conditions and the effects of project activities on wilderness quality of the roadless expanse.

Table 3.12- 1: Attributes of Wilderness and Roadless Characteristics defined in FSH 1909.12, 72.1, 36 CFR 294.11

WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTES	ROADLESS CHARACTERISTICS
Natural Integrity: The extent to which long-term ecological processes are intact and operating.	High quality or undisturbed soil, water, and air. Source of public drinking water. Diversity of plant and animal communities. Habitat for threatened, endangered, candidate, proposed, and sensitive species dependent on large areas.
Apparent Naturalness: Environment looks natural to most people.	Natural appearing landscapes with high scenic quality. Reference landscapes
Solitude and Primitive Recreation: Personal subjective value defined as the isolation from the sights, sounds, and presence of others and the developments of man.	Primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized ROS classes of dispersed recreation.
Remoteness: Perceived condition of being secluded, inaccessible, and out of the way.	
Unique Features: Unique and/or special geological, biological, ecological, cultural, or scenic features.	Other locally identified unique characteristics. Traditional cultural properties and sacred sites.
Manageability/boundaries: Ability to manage a roadless area to meet the minimum size criteria (5,000 acres) for wilderness.	No criteria.

3.12.3.2 Roadless Expanse

About 72 acres of the 115,625 acres Selway-Bitterroot roadless area (about 0.06%) is located on the western edge of the project area. In addition, 1,660 acres of unroaded lands are within the project area. The Selway-Bitterroot roadless area and adjacent unroaded lands form the roadless expanse and are discussed as such in the affected environment and environmental consequences.

The following section describes the characteristics of this roadless expanse:

Natural Integrity

Natural integrity is the extent to which long-term ecological processes are intact and operating. The presence and magnitude of human-induced change to an area is the measure of project effects on natural integrity. Lost Horse canyon bottom contains most of the pre-1985 impacts of human activity in the roadless expanse. Como Lake Trail #502, a National Recreation Trail, borders the south end of the project area. Trail bridges and corduroy sections across boggy sections of trail, and isolated pockets of heavy recreation use along the trail moderately reduce the natural integrity. Non-native plants encroach into the roadless area, and livestock use is evident in streams and open areas.

Fire suppression currently alters the natural integrity of the roadless expanse. Fire is a natural condition on the landscape and was typically of high frequency and low severity, which maintained open ponderosa pine stands. The ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine, and Douglas-fir stands have higher tree stocking and fewer open grasslands than might be expected. Non-native, invasive plants are present in the area. These conditions create the potential for more severe fires.

Though roads into this area are not apparent, timber harvest or thinning has occurred in portion of these lands, in most cases, since the 1970s.

Human activities outside of the project area on the Darby Ranger District affect the "natural integrity" roadless expanse. These activities include:

- an old jeep trail in the South of Lost Horse
- reservoir drawdown on Como,
- South Fork of Lost Horse Creek Trail #128
- Lost Horse Road (NFSR 428)

Apparent Naturalness

Apparent naturalness means that the environment looks natural to most people using the area. It measures visitor perceptions of human impacts on the area. Impacts are widely dispersed but evident to most visitors. However, because of the type of human related disturbances, the area has a high rating for natural appearance. Evidence of human activities near the roadless expanse limits this area's apparent naturalness, though at the site level, much of this area appears quite natural to the visitor.

The roadless expanse retains its apparent naturalness though timber harvest occurred in the 1980s. The harvest treatments were a combination of non-commercial thin or sanitation cuts that have left most of the forest overstory intact. However, a visitor may notice cut stumps and overgrown skid trails and roadbeds. Roads adjacent to the roadless expanse compromise the apparent naturalness because of their existence and the proximity to the sights and sounds of the human uses occurring on them.

Access around the gate of NFSR 5608, a stored road, has been blocked but the trail has not been rehabilitated. NFSR 62966, another stored road, was not effectively closed until 2014. The effects of use also need to be rehabilitated. These two areas detract from the apparent naturalness of the area. Though the degraded areas are outside of the roadless expanse boundary, they affect the apparent naturalness of the general setting.

Remoteness

Remoteness is a perceived condition of being secluded, inaccessible, and out of the way. The physical factors that can create "remote" settings include topography, vegetative

screening, distance from human impacts such as roads and logging operations (sight and sound).

Civilization appears near when looking south to the Lake Como Recreation area or eastward towards the Bitterroot valley. Lake Como is the most utilized developed recreation site on the forest, and consists of developed campgrounds, trailheads, day use sites, a rental cabin, and pavilion. The Bitterroot valley is visible from various viewpoints in the roadless expanse. Vegetative and topographic screens enhance the user's sense of remoteness in some areas.

The proximity of roads and management activities on adjacent National Forest diminish the perception of remoteness and seclusion.

Opportunity for Solitude

Solitude is a personal, subjective value defined as isolation from the sights, sounds, and presence of others, and human developments. Common indicators of solitude are numbers of individuals or parties one may expect to encounter in an area during a day, or the number of parties camped within sight and sound of other visitors.

Human activity is moderate in this portion of the roadless expanse. The trail bordering the project area gets moderate use throughout the year and continues up the canyon and into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. The opportunity for solitude diminishes as you move south in the project area closer to Lake Como Recreation area due to the management activities and higher presence of visitors.

Much of the terrain in the canyons and ridges in this area are rocky and steep. Ridges and slope breaks obscure the view and sounds from surrounding roads and on-going management. Opportunities for solitude are high, especially when one is away from the trails and areas beyond the sights and sounds of the valley floor. Knowing that over a million acres of wilderness lie to the west and observing the precipitous, glacially carved terrain enhances the feeling of solitude.

Special Features and Special Places

Special features are those unique geological, biological, ecological, cultural, or scenic features that may be located in the area. This rugged and scenic landscape has changed little since the ice age. This habitat gives one a feeling of serenity and spaciousness. Elk and deer summer on the more gentle sites. Falcons nest in some of these canyons. Magnificent views of past glaciation exist throughout this area.

Big game hunting, fishing, horseback riding and hiking the trail system around Lake Como or continuing into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness to Elk or Bell Lakes makes up most of the human use in this area.

Manageability (Boundaries)

This element relates to the ability of the Forest Service to manage the area to meet size criteria and the elements discussed above. Changes in the shape of an area influence how it can be managed. The locations of projects proposed outside the area also need to be considered. Boundary management effects relate to such factors as the need to provide access to the area and to match boundaries to terrain features that can be easily located. Manageability or boundaries was not a wilderness quality factor rated in RARE II, but is a factor considered since the mid-1990s to evaluate effects on roadless areas (FSH 1909.12 72.1(5)).

The roadless expanse abuts the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness on the west. The eastern boundary traverses mid-slope above roads and timber harvest units. The roadless expanse contains good topographic features that facilitate identification of the Wilderness boundary and as such have the potential to be managed as Wilderness.

3.12.3.3 Lost Horse Creek: Eligible Wild and Scenic River

About 14.2 miles of Lost Horse Creek, from Lost Horse Bridge to Bear Creek Pass and Twin Lakes Dam is eligible for study to determine suitability for "scenic" classification under the Wild and Scenic River System (Appendix O, Forest Plan). Section 2 (b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act states, "*Scenic river areas are those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.*" A 0.74-mile eligible for study section of Lost Horse Creek overlaps the Como Forest Health project area and has a management area designation of 3c. Timber harvest and road construction are allowed in this management area as long as visual quality is maintained (Forest Plan III-32, III-34).

The Lost Horse drainage is a picturesque canyon with cliffs and rock outcrops, and is an excellent example of an alpine, glaciated "U-shaped" valley. A primitive dirt road parallels the stream to its headwaters, which makes the canyon available to the non-hiker. This canyon is an outstanding recreational opportunity to view a large mountain stream surrounded by rocky mountain peaks, snow slides, and old growth forests.

3.12.4 Environmental Consequences

The Como Forest Health project effects on wilderness attributes and roadless area characteristics are analyzed at two levels:

- the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness
- the roadless expanse, which includes the, Selway Bitterroot Roadless Area and 1,660 acres of unroaded areas within the project area.

Como Forest Health project effects are also analyzed on the section of Lost Horse Creek eligible for inclusion to the Wild and Scenic River system as a scenic river under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

3.12.4.1 Effects Common to All Alternatives

Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness

There will be no direct effects on wilderness attributes in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness from the Como Forest Health project because no activities are proposed within Wilderness and the roadless expanse separates the project area from the Wilderness. Indirect effects may include sights and sounds of commercial and small tree thinning activities on non-wilderness lands. The sights and sounds of the work crews and their equipment might affect solitude and primitive recreation in some parts of the Wilderness, although proposed activities are downstream and more than one air mile from wilderness boundaries. The distance from proposed activities to the wilderness and intervening landforms would mitigate noise and smoke from proposed activities. Noise would be at levels below ambient wilderness sounds.

Roadless Expanse

For most of the roadless expanse, the project area is out of sight and inaudible and would have little impact on remoteness. The proposed activities would not markedly diminish the natural appearing nature of the area. Effects on the components of the roadless expanse vary based on their proximity to the proposed activities. Effects specific to the roadless expanse are described for each alternative.

Wild and Scenic Eligible Status

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act has no restrictions on the type or nature of activities permitted or prohibited. That direction was deferred to River Management Plans for individual designated rivers. The information contained in this report indicates the Como Forest Health project would be consistent with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act because there would be no impediment to free flow of the stream, the outstandingly remarkable values would be protected, and proposed activities are consistent with the Bitterroot National Forest Plan.

The effects of the Como Forest Health project on the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and Lost Horse Creek, eligible for scenic classification under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, are not analyzed further.

3.12.4.2 Alternative 1 – No Action

Direct Effects

There are no direct effects of choosing the no action alternative on wilderness attributes or the roadless characteristics of the roadless expanse.

Indirect Effects

In the event of wildfire, the intensity and severity of fire in the area of overlap with the project area is potentially greater in Alternative 1 than in Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 because no fuel reduction would occur under Alternative 1. Wildfire could cause temporary forest road closures and jeopardize public health and safety.

Under Alternative 1, there would be no change to the existing recreational opportunities or travel access since no new management activities would occur.

3.12.4.3 Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

Under Alternative 2, commercial, non-commercial, and prescribed fire are proposed on 764 acres (44%) of the roadless expanse in the project area (Table 3.12- 2). approximately 33% of the treatment occurring in the roadless expanse would be prescribed fire.

220 acres of commercial harvest and 45 acres of non-commercial thinning would occur. Commercial harvest, in and adjacent to the roadless expanse would require the construction of 0.63 miles of new system road, 0.30 miles of temporary road, and 0.55 miles of TLM trail (Table 3.12- 2, Figure 3.12- 2). None of the roadwork proposed in this alternative would occur in the inventoried roadless area.

Direct and Indirect Effects

Approximately 764 acres of prescribed burning is proposed within the roadless expanse in Alternative 2 (Figure 3.12- 2).

Prescribed fire treatments in the roadless expanse would not greatly affect the roadless characteristics because low and moderate intensity fires are typical of the forest

ecosystems in the area and influence the development of the forest communities. Though the appearance of the vegetation would change, it would be within the parameters of natural integrity and apparent naturalness. In the areas that burn at low severity, visitors would see charred duff, scorched underbrush, and possibly scorched lower branches of the overstory forest. The areas of moderate severity fire would have these same characteristics with the addition of individual and small groups of burned trees and areas of scorched ground. Fire scars are evident throughout the area. Fireline construction and the number of personnel on site to manage the fire would compromise the attributes of remoteness and solitude during prescribed fire operations.

Table 3.12- 2: Alternative Comparison of the Proposed Treatments In the Roadless Expanse

TREATMENTS IN ROADLESS EXPANSE ¹	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4
Total Area in Project Area(acres)	1,732	1,732	1,732
Non-commercial Thin with Prescribed Fire (acres)	45	86	53
Commercial Thin with Prescribed Fire (acres)	218	132	101
Commercial Thin only (unit 48)	2	2	2
Non-commercial thin only (acres)	0	0	14 (aspen unit 75)
Prescribed Fire only	573	542	165
New NFSR Roads (mile)	0.63	N/A	0.17
Temporary Roads (mile)	0.30	N/A	0.30
TLM trails (mile)	0.55	N/A	0
Total Treatment acres/mile	838/1.48	762/0	335/0.47

¹ Roadless expanse is the combined Selway-Bitterroot Roadless Area and adjacent unroaded areas.

Commercial harvest and non-commercial thins would occur on 15% of the roadless expanse in the project area (0.2% of the entire roadless expanse). The commercial harvest units require the construction of new and temporary roads and tracked line-machine trails to access the timber (Table 3.12- 2, Figure 3.12- 2). The proposed temporary roads and TLM trails would be rehabilitated following their use (Table 2.2-5). The 0.63 mile of new system road would be closed to vehicle use following harvest completion. The temporary roads and TLM trails would detract from apparent naturalness during project implementation until such time that they are rehabilitated and ground cover is re-established. The new system road would continue to detract from apparent naturalness after the project is completed. Project implementation activities would reduce the attributes of remoteness and solitude by the presence of workers, vehicles, and the sound of equipment until all the proposed projects are complete and ground cover has re-grown. However, these attributes are already low because units border roaded areas that provide direct views to the sights and sounds of traffic and management activities on adjoining National Forest.

The project would not diminish water quality and air quality effects would be minor as described in the air quality section. Effects on wildlife and threatened and endangered species would be minimal (wildlife section). The Como Forest Health project does not create additional access into the unroaded area.

3.12.4.4 Alternative 3

Under Alternative 3, commercial, non-commercial, and prescribed fire are proposed on 762 acres (44%) of the roadless expanse in the project area (0.65% of the entire roadless

expanse) (Table 3.12- 2). Approximately 31% of the treatments occurring in the roadless expanse would be prescribed fire. There would also be 134 acres of commercial harvest, 86 acres of non-commercial thinning and it would occur on about 13% of the roadless expanse. No new roads would be constructed under this alternative Table 3.12- 2, Figure 3.12- 3).

Direct and Indirect Effects

The effects of prescribed fire treatments on the attributes would be the same as described in Alternative 2, except that about 31, fewer acres would be burned. Commercial harvest and non-commercial thin units do not require the construction of road, temporary road, or TLM trail under this alternative. The apparent naturalness of the unroaded area would be retained during project implementation because roads and trails would not be constructed. Project implementation activities would reduce the attributes of remoteness and solitude by the presence of workers, vehicles, and the sound of equipment. However, these attributes are already low because units border roaded areas that provide direct views to the sights and sounds of traffic and management activities on adjoining forest lands.

3.12.4.5 Alternative 4

Under Alternative 4, commercial, non-commercial, and prescribed fire are proposed on 335 acres (20%) of the roadless expanse in the project area (0.3% of the entire roadless expanse) Table 3.12- 2. Approximately 10% of the treatments occurring in the roadless expanse in the project area would be prescribed fire, .

The remaining 10% of the treatments in the roadless expanse would be 103 acres of commercial harvest and 67 acres of non-commercial thinning . These activities would require the construction of 0.17 mile of system road, and 0.30 mile of temporary road. No TLM trails would be developed (Table 3.12- 2, Figure 3.12- 4).

Direct and Indirect Effects

The effects of prescribed fire treatments on the attributes would be the same as described in Alternatives 2 and 3, though 503 and 427 fewer acres, respectively, would be treated than in these alternatives.

The commercial harvest of Unit 50 would require the construction of new and temporary roads (Table 3.12- 2, Figure 3.12- 4). As in Alternative 2, the proposed temporary roads would be rehabilitated following their use (Table 2.2-5). The roads would detract from apparent naturalness during project implementation until such time that they are rehabilitated and ground cover is reestablished. The 0.17 mile of new system road would be closed to vehicle use following harvest completion. Project implementation activities would reduce the attributes of remoteness and solitude by the presence of workers, vehicles and the sound of equipment. However, these attributes are already low because units border roaded areas that provide direct views to the sights and sounds of traffic and management activities on adjoining National Forest.

Slight reductions to the attributes of remoteness and solitude in the roadless expanse would be expected during Como Forest Health project implementation. The sights and sounds of logging adjacent to the roadless areas would diminish each of these attributes for the period of logging and after logging until all the proposed projects are complete and

Figure 3.12- 2: Treatments Proposed in Alternative 2 Relative to the Roadless Expanse within the Como Forest Health Project Area.

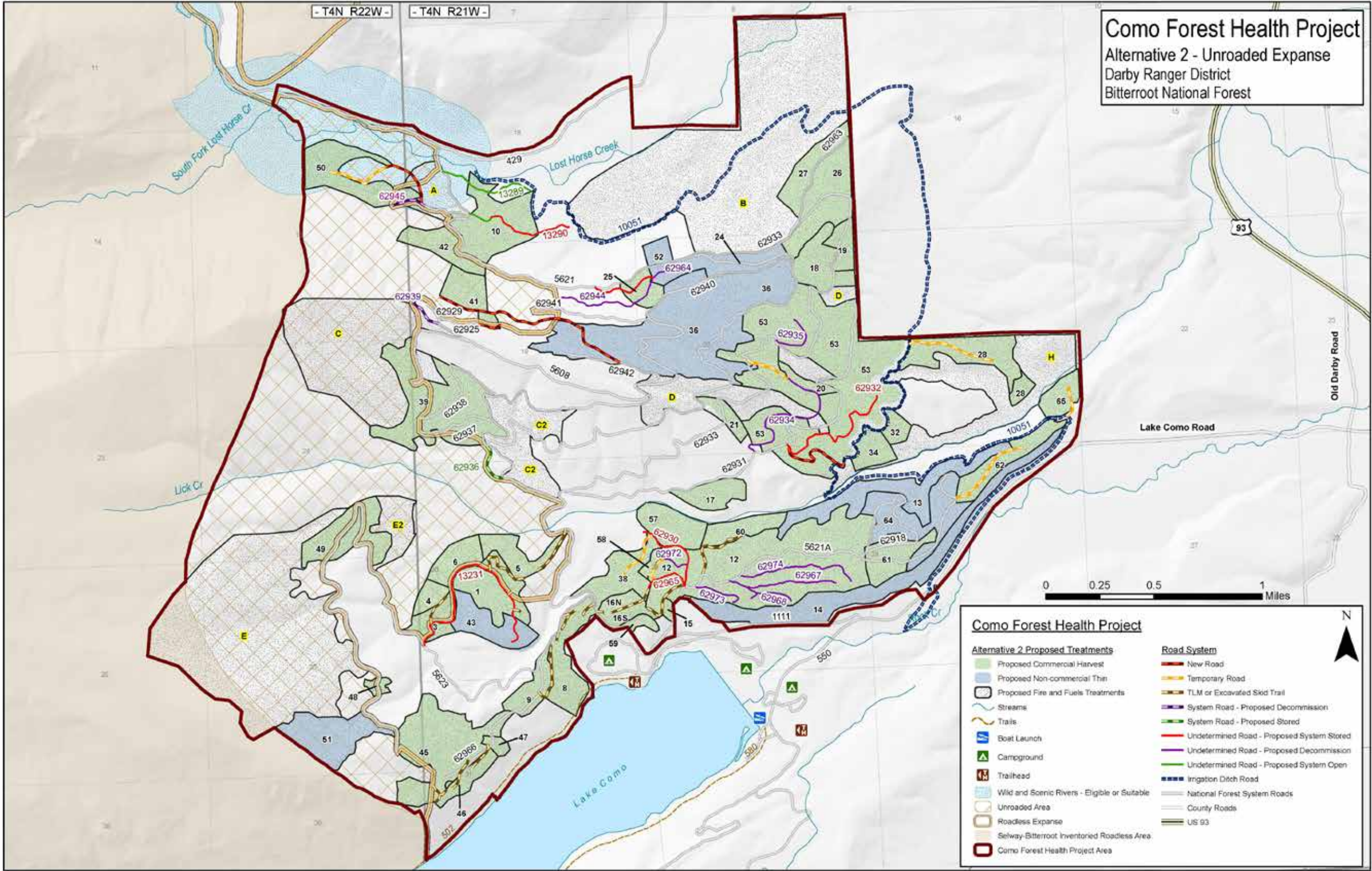


Figure 3.12- 3: Treatments Proposed in Alternative 3 Relative to the Roadless Expanse within the Como Forest Health Project Area.

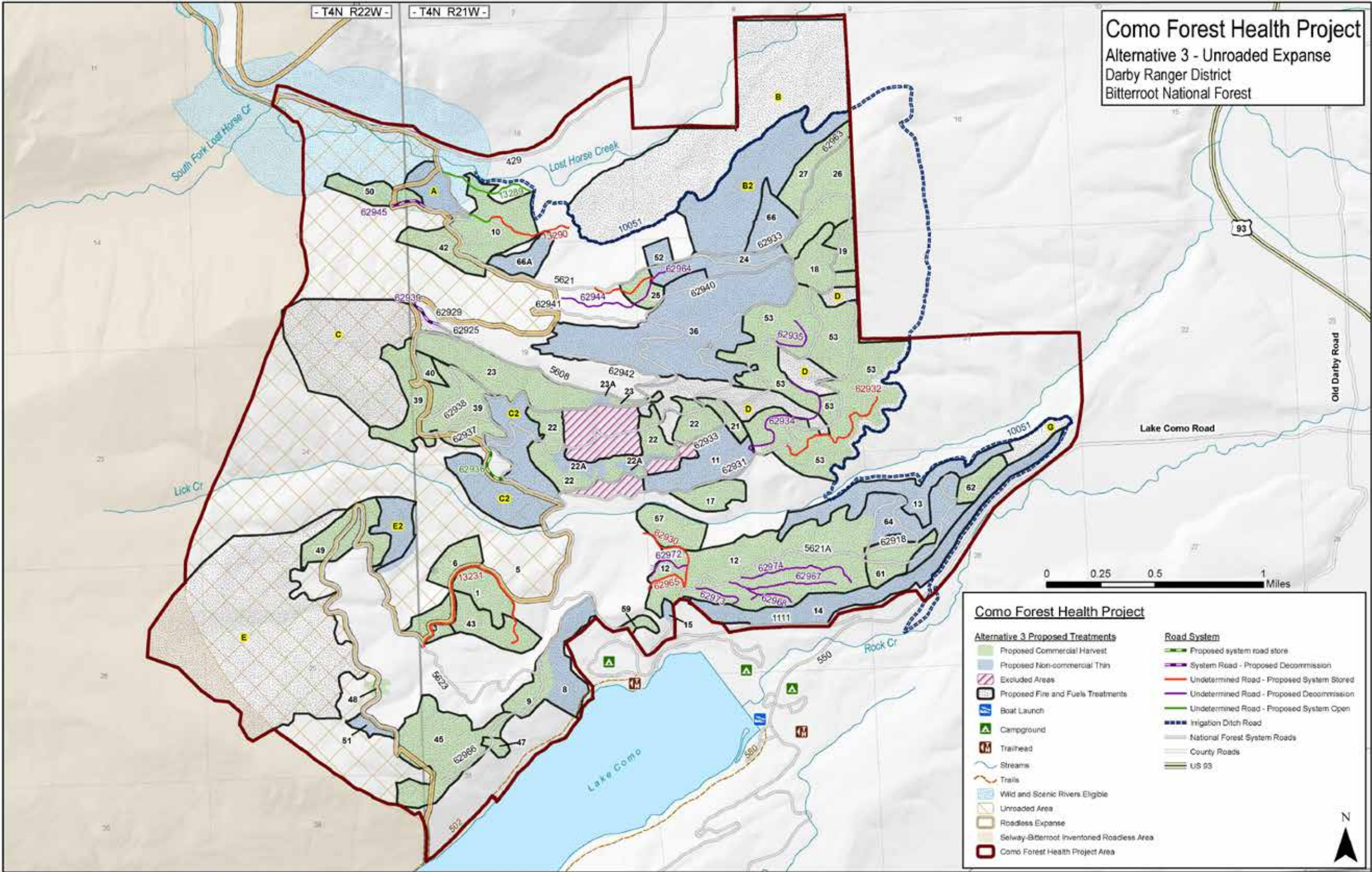
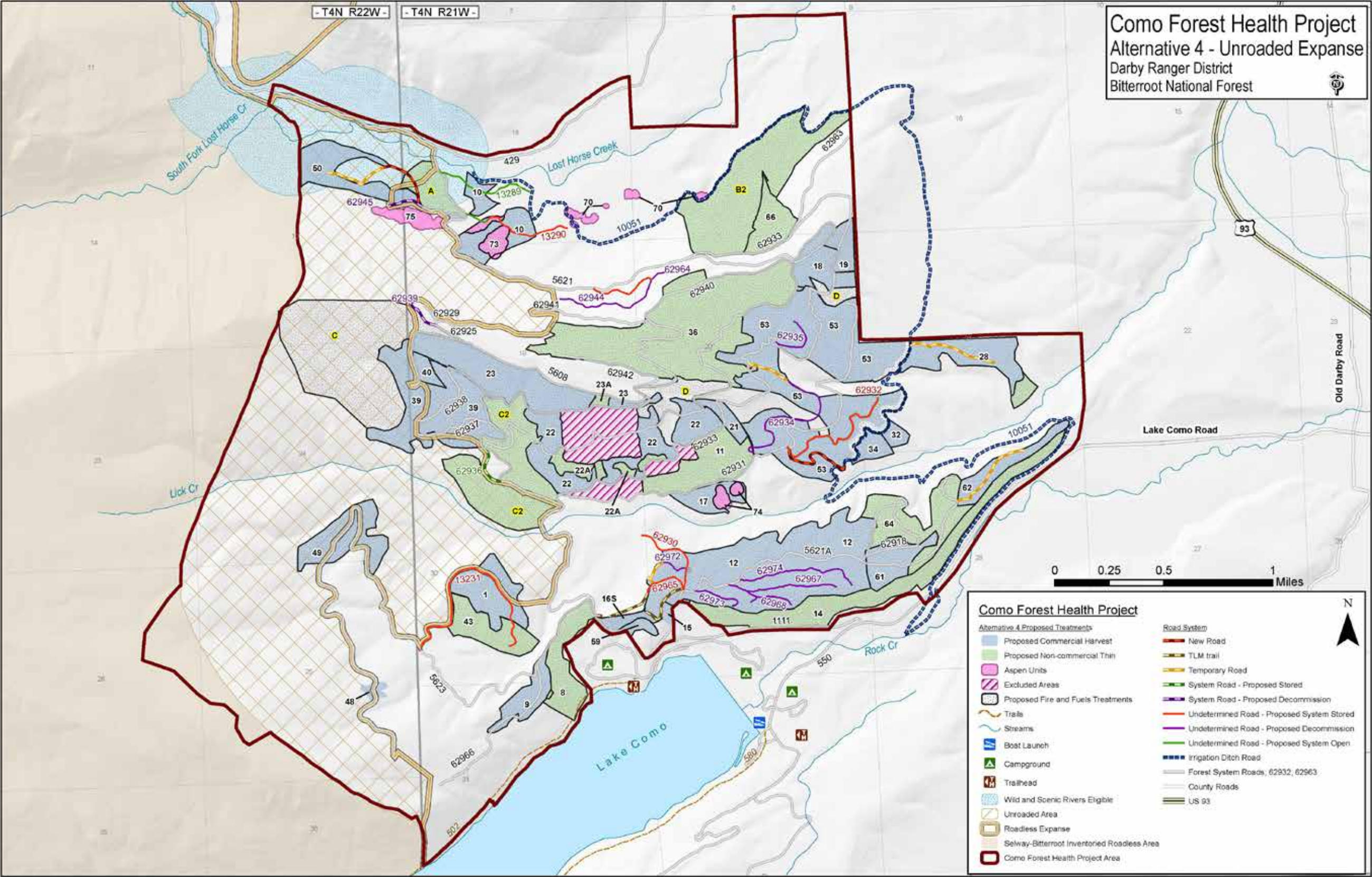


Figure 3.12- 4: Treatments Proposed in Alternative 4 Relative to the Roadless Expanse within the Como Forest Health Project Area



ground cover has re-grown. Visitors in the roadless area may view and experience sights and sounds from the project area.

The project would not diminish water quality and air quality effects are minor and described in the air quality section. Effects on wildlife and threatened and endangered species would be minimal (Wildlife section). The project does not create additional access into the roadless expanse or change the recreation experience for the same reasons as described in Alternative 2.

3.12.4.6 Cumulative Effects Common to Alternatives 2, 3, and 4

The past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions will have minimal cumulative effects on the wilderness attributes and roadless characteristics of the roadless expanse in the project area. The areas with the highest wilderness and roadless attributes would remain unchanged in the long term.

Road construction and timber harvest do not affect wilderness attributes in the wilderness because they are not present and the wilderness is buffered from the proposed activities by the roadless expanse. They have had minor effects on roadless characteristics in the roadless expanse as described in the existing condition and Forest Plan monitoring reports (PF-Roadless-001).

Unroaded areas closest to the roaded areas are most affected by past, present, and proposed management activities. Unroaded areas closest to the roaded areas also have the lowest roadless characteristics and wilderness attributes. Past timber harvest has occurred on 815 acres of the roadless expanse in the project area (PF-Roadless-002).

Roadless Expanse

The roadless expanse consists of 115,625 acres of Inventoried Roadless Area and 1660 acres of unroaded area in the Como Forest Health project area. Proposed treatments in the Como Forest Health project would affect 0.71% of the roadless expanse in Alternative 2, 0.64% of the roadless expanse in Alternative 3, or 0.3% of the roadless expanse in Alternative 4.

Under the 2004 Weed EIS, the Forest Service can treat weed infestations in specific locations of the roadless expanse. The 2009 Selway-Bitterroot Weeds EIS extended this management option into the Wilderness. Weed treatments benefit wilderness and roadless areas by eliminating weeds and potential sources of weed spread. Weed suppression actions in the project area would not have adverse cumulative effects on roadless attributes. Suppressing weeds would favor recovery and spread of desirable native plant species.

Annual trail maintenance will be ongoing on Trail 502, within the roadless expanse. This work involves clearing the trail of fallen logs, cleaning waterbars, and brushing. During this time, workers may be visible in the roadless expanse. The activity will be temporary and restricted in area. The potential cumulative effect of this disturbance and the actions in Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 on solitude would be restricted to a small part of the roadless expanse.

3.12.4.7 Compliance with Forest Plan, Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policies

All alternatives are consistent with Forest Plan directions regarding inventoried roadless areas and the Wilderness Act of 1964. No treatments are proposed in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and prescribed fire is the only treatment that extends into the Selway-Bitterroot Roadless Area.